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20 YEARS!
1987-2007
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Powers

Powers Shift

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Apparently, *Brian Bendis* isn't a man who puts much stock in truisms... and that's a good thing for readers of his acclaimed series ***Powers***.

This story of an ex-superhero cop and his partner operating in a world populated by super-powered beings has been a favorite of Bendis fans since it debuted from Image Comics in 2000; after four successful years there, Bendis took the book to Marvel, where it joined their creator-owned Icon line. For the duration of its Marvel run, ***Powers*** has been a thirty-two page comic.

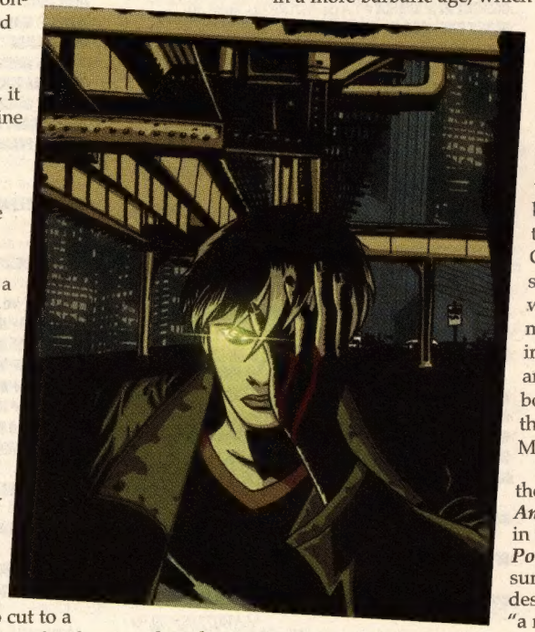
Recently, though, Bendis began it was time for a few changes in Christian Walker and Deena Pilgrim's noir-esque saga. "First off, ***Powers*** is changing formats with #25," Bendis said. "We're going to a higher quality paper stock, thicker covers, and forty pages an issue instead of the thirty-two that we're running at now—which means there will be much more content per issue. Mike and I felt that we needed extra pages for the story, and even the letter column has been cut off here and there, and I wanted to bring back the 'Powers Personals' that we were doing last year, but we just didn't have room for it all. We just got to a point where we realized that not every book had to be thirty-two pages long."

The upgrade in format and pagecount comes at a small price, however: the book will increase in price from $2.95 to $3.99 with the introduction of the new format in ***Powers #25***. "We're kind of splitting the increase in cost with the audience," Bendis explained. "This is the first time we've increased our price since we started in 1999, even through our format changes, and issues where we had so much content that we ran the story on to the back cover. As it is, most of our issues were running at 28-29 pages of story for $2.95.

"We just got to a breaking point and realized that this is a different kind of story than a regular superhero story, so we felt it could work best in a different format. It was silly for us to fight the format when we controlled how many pages we could actually have in the book."

This issue not only marks a change in format and pagecount, it also kicks off a major new storyline with built-in fan appeal: "The 25 Coolest Dead Superheroes of All Time."

"I figure that's my coolest title ever, not to be braggy," Bendis said with a chuckle. "That issue will start off a storyline which is a very big story for people who've been following the book, and even for people who haven't followed it in a while. Walker has powers now, and Deena has the Powers virus, which gives her powers, but it's like being an addict—you have to be in contact with other people with powers to keep your powers going.



"The Powers virus is taking over the city, and someone is stalking the children of the city with this virus, so we're going to cut to a story which actually skips eight months ahead to show how much damage has been done to the city, and also to Walker, Deena, and their relationship. It's a pretty pivotal story, and we thought this would be the perfect place to start it."

As big as this story is, it's not the biggest tale that Bendis has planned for 2007. "We also have a ***Powers Annual*** coming that's written by *Mike [Oeming*, ***Powers*** artist], who will be applying his formidable writing talents that he's developed over the years since we started this whole thing. He'll actually be *co*-writing, because I'll be writing the wrap-around story, but most of the story is written and drawn by Mike."

As Bendis explained, the Annual's story builds off the original ***Powers #32*** from Image, which focused on Walker's earlier days. "The story is a flashback story to Walker's years in a more barbaric age, which really touches upon Mike's talents for capturing that kind of story," Bendis said. "He said that he had this idea that played into the story we did a few years back that showed Walker's journey as he literally walked through time. Mike took a liking to the barbarian Walker story that we told where he was named Gora, and wanted to tell a story set in that time that would actually apply to the modern story—so I'll be writing the modern story around it, and he'll be writing most of the book, which is the story set in the past. It's all drawn by Mike."

An expanded pagecount for the ***Powers*** series, a ***Powers Annual...*** is there anything else in the works? Well, howsabout a ***Powers Encyclopedia*** for your summertime edification? Bendis describes the reference volume as "a much-requested long-asked-for product that details the history of the characters in the series. We have literally over two hundred characters that we've destroyed over the last seven years or so, so we're putting them into a reference book in a format that is similar but different to the ***Marvel Encyclopedia***.

"*Tim Daniel*, who's responsible for the ***Powers*** daily strip at Newsarama.com, is the point man for the ***Powers Encyclopedia***. He actually pushed us to put it together and did a lot of the leg work for us. Talk about a guy who came at us cold! – he came to us out of the blue with all the ideas for the daily strip, and now we've hired him."

While the occasional delays between issues of ***Powers*** may sometimes make it seem that Bendis & Oeming are putting the book behind their higher-profile projects, Bendis assures readers that's not the case. "I work on ***Powers*** just as much as I do with my higher profile books like ***New Avengers*** or ***Ultimate Spider-Man*** or anything else, and I know the same is true for Mike, and it can sometimes feel like ***Powers*** gets lost in the craziness of all of that. But I'm still here in my office working as hard on Powers as I've worked on anything else I work on. It's an equal amount of effort for both of us, and an equal amount of passion.

"It's sometimes that's hard to get that out there at times when everyone's yelling and screaming at you about Hawkeye. It's funny though – sometimes when I meet up with people who like my creator-owned work more than my work for hire and tell me that I need to do more creator-owned work. I do – every month. Check it out!"

Part of the appeal of ***Powers***, beyond the fact that Bendis & Oeming own it and have total control over the book, is that the duo get a chance to shake things up on a regular basis, reinventing the series as they see fit. "***Powers***, by its definition, is always about something new—every case is almost a different subgenre of comics in general or crime books. We can go in a totally different direction every so many issues, and the characters can evolve so much. We don't have to follow a lot of the rules of mainstream comics—we can skip whole years, we can go back and forth in time. There are a lot of things that we can do, because it's only us. We're not beholden to other titles or other creators working on the same characters.

"And also, we get to describe a part of the larger genre that can't be described in one way, which is death and how it affects a society with heroes in it. You can see this actually now with Captain America; it's a fascinating subject with no end in sight, and no one way that you can interpret it."

Bendis is aware that a policeman's career is finite, and so is a series chronicling a policeman's career... even when that policeman operates in a world of super-powers. "Yeah, there is an end for ***Powers,***" Bendis said, "but it's not soon at all. We do know how the story ends, and it will come on its own. We even have an idea in our heads to not tell anybody, and to just have it happen so people will be reading along, and reach the end of the issue, and say, 'Wait – what? *That's it*?'

"I gotta admit, there's something cool about doing that. After all, every ending that comes in pop culture, you know it's coming. You know the final episodes of series, the final movies of a series. I would love to have Powers so you never know when the last issue will hit. I don't know if I'm gong to do it, because the huckster in me might not be able to shut up about it.

"Not to mention I've just told everyone about it, so I guess I've already planted that seed of anticipation."

Rest assured, though, that end isn't coming any time soon—in fact, now that Bendis & Oeming have a new expanded format and a major storyline in the works, they're more jazzed than ever to keep chronicling the world of ***Powers*** for quite a long while.

Powers #25, a $3.99 comic, is scheduled for May release.

by Matt Brady (with Cliff Biggers)

Courtesy your friendly neighborhood comics outlet!

The following comics and comics-related books are tentatively slated for release on the dates given; if no date is given, the books are tentatively scheduled for release sometime in the month of May. It's very common for items to be delayed for a variety of reasons, so none of these dates are guaranteed. For the latest information on shipping and publishing delays, talk to the friendly folks at the comic shop where you got this issue of CSN! And yes, we are aware that some publishers regularly run an average of a month or so late on many of their titles—nevertheless, we go by the schedules they provide.

NOTE: At the request of many retailers, fans, and publishers, we have added Diamond Comic Distributors' code numbers after the publisher's name for each item; this will assist in placing special orders, etc.

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○**100 BULLETS #84** 5/30 Vertigo/DC MAR070264 $2.99
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○**2000 AD #1537** Rebellion MAR073668 $4.10
○**2000 AD #1538** Rebellion MAR073669 $4.10
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○**52 ANIMAL MAN ACTION FIGURE** 5/2 DC Direct OCT060301 $19.99
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○**52 WEEK #52** 5/2 DC FEB070244 $2.50
The finale of the year-long series is here,paving the way for the launch of Countdown
○**ACTION COMICS #849** 5/16 DC MAR070181 $2.99
○**ACTION COMICS #850** 5/30 DC MAR070182 $3.99
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○**ACTION HEROES ARCHIVES VOL 2 HC** 5/23 DC JAN070280 $75.00
Collecting Blue Beetle stories from Captain ATom, Blue Beetle, Mysterious Suspense, & Charlton Bullseye, along with stories never published by Charlton

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PETER JOHNSON MATTH

MAY 2007

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